

Veterinarians:



Protecting Animals—and Humans

If your family is anything like ours, you spent as much time selecting a veterinarian to care for your family pet as you did a general practitioner to treat the family's ailments. It was important to have a qualified, caring, doctor taking care of our furry child when he was under the weather, since Bodhi, our dog, is a valued family member who can't speak for himself. Fortunately, there are twenty-eight veterinary medicine schools in the U.S. so finding a veterinarian was not a difficult task.

The Standard Occupational Classification definition of veterinarian is those who “diagnose, treat, or research diseases and injuries of animals. This definition includes veterinarians who conduct research and development, inspect livestock, or care for pets and companion animals.”

Veterinarians care not only for dogs and cats, but also for wild and other domesticated animals. In rural areas, general practice veterinarians who care for cattle, horses, sheep, as well as family pets, are common. Veterinarians also specialize in certain animals by size or by species or by kind of treatment. This specialization is more common in urban and suburban areas.

Currently twenty veterinary specialties are recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), including anesthesiology, behavior, dermatology, emergency and critical care, internal medicine, cardiology, oncology, ophthalmology, neurology, radiology and surgery. In order to become a specialist, a veterinarian must complete additional training after graduation from veterinary school in the form of an internship and residency and then pass a rigorous examination.

A veterinarian's skills can also contribute to human as well as animal health. Veterinarians work with physicians and scientists as they research ways to prevent and treat various human health problems. For example, veterinarians contributed greatly to conquering malaria and yellow fever, solved the mystery of botulism, produced an anticoagulant used to treat some people with heart disease, and defined and developed surgical techniques for humans, such as hip and knee joint replacements

and limb and organ transplants. Today, veterinarians determine the effects of drug therapies, antibiotics, or new surgical techniques by testing them on animals. Some veterinarians also are involved in the humane treatment of animals.

Some veterinarians are involved in food safety and inspection. Veterinarians who are livestock inspectors, for example, check animals for transmissible diseases such as E. coli, advise owners on the treatment of their animals, and may quarantine animals. Veterinarians who are meat, poultry, or egg product inspectors examine slaughtering and processing plants, check live animals and carcasses for disease, and enforce government regulations regarding food purity and sanitation. More veterinarians are finding opportunities in food security as they ensure that the nation has abundant and safe food supplies. Veterinarians involved in food security often work along the country's borders as animal and plant health inspectors, where they examine imports and exports of animal products to prevent disease here and in foreign countries. Many of these workers are employed by the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service division, or the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Veterinary Medicine.

A 4-year undergraduate degree emphasizing classes such as biology, chemistry, zoology, and anatomy is the first academic step toward a veterinary medicine degree. Some institutions waive this in favor of a significant number of undergraduate credit hours (45-90). This is followed by a 4-year program at an accredited veterinary university to earn a Doctor in Veterinary Medicine degree. Once the required state board examinations for a license are passed, the veterinarian may begin practice in the science of caring for animals—all those little Bodhis in the world. ⓘ

Resources:

- www.bls.gov
- www.avma.com
- <http://jobs.utah.gov>
- www.utahfutures.org



In addition to the 20 veterinary specialties recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), a veterinarian can become a livestock inspector or be involved in food safety and inspection.

Occupational Wages-Published June 2010
(data from May 2009) for Veterinarians

Area Name	Hourly Inexperienced	Hourly Median	Annual Inexperienced	Annual Median	Training Level
Ogden-Clearfield MSA	\$30.38	\$54.24	\$63,190	\$112,830	First professional degree
Provo-Orem MSA	\$36.04	\$42.66	\$74,970	\$88,720	First professional degree
Salt Lake City MSA	\$22.14	\$35.35	\$46,050	\$73,530	First professional degree
United States	—	\$38.71	—	\$80,510	First professional degree
Utah	\$25.02	\$38.31	\$52,040	\$79,690	First professional degree